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Fifty-eighth session

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New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I first call on His Excellency The Honourable Louis Straker, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Straker (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): The fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly affords me the special privilege, honour and pleasure of congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the office of President of the General Assembly. As a distinguished son of our neighbouring island, Saint Lucia, you do great honour to your country and to the whole Caribbean Community family. I take great pride in what you, Sir, a fellow Foreign Minister and my dear friend, have accomplished, and trust that, under your astute leadership, this fifty-eighth session will chart the right course, which will enable the Organization to fulfil the expectations of mankind for a secure, peaceful and prosperous world. Who knoweth but that by some divine order you have come to the presidency of this body at such a time as this.

Let me first express, on behalf of the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, deepest sympathy to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the entire United Nations family on the loss of Sergio Vieira de Mello and other United Nations personnel in the terrorist attack in Baghdad. Those dedicated United Nations workers strived for peace and justice for the people of the world. They lived for that cause, and, tragically, they gave their lives for that cause. We share the pain of this loss and the bewilderment over it, and pay tribute to all those United Nations staff members who put duty before self in the service of mankind.

My Government acknowledges with appreciation the sterling work being done in difficult conditions all over the developing world by United Nations agencies, from peacekeeping and the restoration of democracy to development cooperation and humanitarian aid. I also wish to single out for particular mention the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations Population Fund. We urge Member States to continue to give support and assistance to these organizations, which make such a difference, particularly in the lives of women and children, in the poorest sectors of the world.

We have heard speaker after speaker, over the course of the past week, suggesting that the United Nations is in crisis. Many have proposed solutions for the rectification of this unhappy state of affairs. It is my Government's contention that the General Assembly needs to retake its place as the central platform of the Organization, because it is the only truly democratic arm of the United Nations. In this regard, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines intends to participate fully in the ongoing debate on reform which will be led by you, Mr. President, and we are hopeful that, with your able guidance, some real progress can

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be made in this fifty-eighth session. Of particular concern to small missions like my own is the volume and variety of work between September and December every year. The way the work of the General Assembly is designed makes it difficult for us to make the kind of contribution that we would wish for the effective and efficient operation of the Organization. The Secretary-General said in his report on the revitalization of the General Assembly:

> "The proliferation of meetings and official documents places excessive demands on both the Secretariat and Member States. Many smaller Member States now find it practically impossible to play a meaningful role in even the most crucial activities of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council" (*A/57/387, para. 23*).

If the work of the General Assembly could be redesigned so as to spread the work load more evenly throughout the calendar year, it would enable small missions like that of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to participate fully in the work of the Organization.

The debate on the reform of the Security Council is fraught with many difficulties and challenges. It is my Government's view that the simple enlargement of the representation on the Security Council may not by itself necessarily lead to greater democratization of that body. No matter how many reform theorems are advanced, the will has to come from the permanent members of the Council that wield the veto. My Government has already urged an increase in the membership of the Council, both permanent and non-permanent, but it seems to us that as long as the veto continues to exist, the Council will not be truly representative of the wishes of the States Members of this Organization and multinational diplomacy will be endangered. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines makes so bold as to say that the solution may also well lie in the removal of the power of veto, to allow for more democracy, greater participation, openness and transparency. Only then, perhaps, will this Organization regain its integrity and respect.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines cherishes the relationships that it enjoys with all countries, both large and small, represented here at the United Nations. The United Nations Charter confers that freedom of representation on all peace-loving and democratic States. Yet my country continues to be deeply troubled that Taiwan is still being excluded from this body.

While we seek to make the United Nations more efficient and effective through much-needed reform, we can advance the cause and the call for reform by making the United Nations more inclusive through the admission to membership of Taiwan and its 23 million people, who have no voice in the United Nations. Taiwan is an exemplary global citizen that maintains friendly relations with almost every country in the world. We would wish for this Organization to be the catalyst that promotes constructive dialogue and friendly engagement so that the Taiwan situation can be resolved in a peaceful, just and equitable way to the benefit of the entire global family.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is proud to be a State party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). We believe in the fundamental role that the ICC has to play in our collective quest for peace and the promotion of the rule of law and justice. We are determined to uphold its integrity.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is proud of our contribution to the emerging Caribbean civilization. Let me quote from a recent speech by our Prime Minister, The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves:

> "The reassembling of the African, Asiatic and European fragments forms the basis of our very Caribbean civilization itself, which is at once shaped and yet evolving. Fundamentally, too, our Caribbean civilization, like all civilizations, has been built on labour — the producers — and the contours of the society fashioned by the social organization of labour".

My small country has made the painful transformation from colonialism to independent democracy in 25 short years. Our people chose not the path leading to war and conflict, but rather opted for the highway of democracy, racial harmony and respect for human rights conducting us to peace, tranquillity and future prosperity. But we are hampered in our quest. My country, like others in the region, is in danger of losing an entire generation to the scourge of HIV/AIDS. We need the help of the international community in the fight against this dreaded disease for the preservation of our society.

Our banana industry, which is the engine that drives our economy, is shortly to succumb to the greed

of certain multinational companies, with the active assistance of the World Trade Organization. Without the banana industry, whose doomsday rapidly approaches, our hardworking peasant farmers will become just another casualty of globalization. The European Union mandates that its sugar farmers get paid 50 euros per tonne — or five times the world market price. Their farmers then dump their product on the market, thus depressing prices for farmers elsewhere. So we may shortly have to bid farewell to the sugar industries of developing nations like Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Mozambique and Guatemala. The United States of America spends more than $3 billion dollars of its taxpayers' money every year to subsidize its cotton growers. This, naturally, signals death to the cotton farmers of Burkina Faso, Benin, Mali, Chad and other developing nations. How can the developed world, which continues to subsidize its farmers and which touts globalization as the cure for all economic ills, continue defending the indefensible?

Cancún, as we all now know, was an abysmal failure. We went there hoping to be led into the Promised Land — only to find ourselves lost and abandoned in the wilderness. We will continue our crusade for economic stability and democratic harmony in our country, but it is self-evident that we need the help of the developed part of the world in order to be viable. It will benefit no one if small countries like Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are marginalized and left to flounder. We are a vulnerable country. The reasons why small island developing States are especially vulnerable are too well known to be repeated here. Our requests for special and differential treatment in the WTO are completely justified and, for the most part, largely ignored.

My Government is cognizant of the fact that terrorism threatens us all. We are therefore fully engaged in the process of implementing Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) — a process which has stretched our limited resources. The oft-repeated promises of help in this process are proving to be, like so many other promises made within these hallowed halls, just that — promises. Yet we read with grave concern in the *New York Times* just last week that, between them, two of the giants of this Organization export arms worth nearly $20 billion every year — the majority, of course, to developing nations. What do arms do in developing nations? They are the fuel that feeds the flames of conflict and terrorism.

Unless we can collectively find the courage and wisdom to tackle the problems of poverty, disease and despair, all the weapons in the world will not prevent the spread of terrorism. We need to move beyond using the United Nations as a talk shop and come together as responsible nations to tackle the root causes of terrorism.

The security which the poorer nations of the world desire is obtained not through the force of arms, but in relief from burdensome debt, employment opportunities, shelter, food, clean water, a healthy environment and access to medical care and life-giving drugs.

Despite its imperfections, the United Nations is the forum that gives us hope. Let us work together so that we can bequeath to our children and to our children's children an Organization that can be used, in the words of the Secretary-General, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, to establish the basic conditions for justice and the rule of law and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. László Kovács, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary.

Mr. Kovács (Hungary): Allow me to extend to you, Sir, our sincere congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. You may rest assured of my delegation's full support in the discharge of your important responsibilities.

It is my painful duty to pay, along with so many of us, a tribute to the memory of Sergio Vieira de Mello and his associates, who sacrificed their lives for the people of Iraq in the service of peace and the United Nations. Our heart goes out to the families of the victims of that cowardly terrorist act.

The world was shocked and saddened when a most respected colleague, and a close friend of mine, the late Anna Lindh, the Swedish Foreign Minister, fell victim to a senseless act of crime in Stockholm. Her vision of the world and her deep commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations will continue to be a source of inspiration to all of us.

Hungary aligned itself with the statement delivered by the presidency of the European Union during the general debate and fully supports it.

We live in a world of great opportunities and serious challenges. It is in this context that global problems require global and concerted solutions. To that effect, we must use the potentials of the United Nations to make the best use of opportunities at hand. In that respect, maintaining or restoring peace and stability, non-proliferation, development and human rights are in the focus of attention of the international community. International terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, grave armed internal conflicts, poverty and illegal migration constitute enormous challenges to all of us.

Hungary remains strongly committed to multilateral institutions. We are firmly convinced that the United Nations can and should play a major role in meeting the multifaceted and ever growing challenges of our contemporary world. We, for our part, are deeply devoted to assisting that role. Along with our partners in the European Union, we are more than prepared to strengthen the United Nations as a unique instrument of a strong multilateral system to tackle global and regional issues for the sake of a safer and more secure world. We will spare no effort to take an active part in maintaining peace and security, enhancing the non-proliferation regimes, protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, and establishing international standards.

The global fight against international terrorism must remain a major priority of the United Nations. In this context, we support the full and effective implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Hungary is keenly interested in widening the scope of multilateral instruments in the fight against terrorism.

After the success of the coalition forces in bringing freedom and the opportunities of democracy in Iraq, we have to turn our attention to the reconstruction and development of that long-suffering country. Hungary is strongly committed to supporting the Iraqi people. Our fellow Hungarians are serving with the coalition forces. We will also attend the donors conference in Madrid later this fall.

We are closely following developments regarding the United Nations assumption of an ever-increasing role in Iraq. I would like to stress that the United Nations has to assume its share of the work both in restoring the sovereignty of Iraq and in the reconstruction process. I believe that our Organization, with ample experience elsewhere, can play a significant role in the establishment of democratic institutions, the rule of law, respect for human rights and election-monitoring. We are studying intensively our possible contributions to this process. For the time being, though, our priority must be the stabilization of the security situation in Iraq and the normalization of day-to-day life.

Hungary is deeply concerned by the grave and deteriorating situation in the Middle East. We believe that the implementation of the road map is the only framework for reaching a political settlement. An effective and credible monitoring mechanism is of critical importance to that effect. The Quartet should carry on with its mission in the peace process. We call upon both the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority to dedicate all their efforts to the full and unconditional implementation of the road map.

The security situation in Afghanistan remains fragile. The Government of Afghanistan deserves our assistance and attention. Terrorist acts and illicit drug-trafficking are causes for serious concern. I am confident that, with the unwavering support of the international community, Afghanistan will soon be a better place for the Afghan people.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, together with the means of their delivery, is a growing and serious threat to international peace and security. The danger of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons in the hands of terrorist groups and States — which are a menace to our world — represents new major security challenges, against which we must act together in a resolute manner, both regionally and globally.

Earlier this year, the European Union (EU) adopted a very important and far-reaching Declaration on Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Hungary will work hard with its partners in the EU towards the effective implementation of that new instrument and of the recently agreed EU Action Plan.

In the current world security environment, the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) needs to be reinforced. We call on the States remaining outside the NPT to accede to it

unconditionally and to accept the nearly universal norms of nuclear non-proliferation.

Revelations about large-scale nuclear programmes and the failure to provide sufficient explanations as to their purpose and nature have given rise to legitimate concerns on the part of the international community. There is a growing recognition — shared by Hungary — that those programmes imply serious proliferation risks as well.

We view the first follow-up meeting of the States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), held at Geneva in August this year, as encouraging. The participants rightly focused on practical actions. We look forward to seeing further progress in strengthening national implementation of the BWC at the next meeting, in November.

Hungary remains strongly committed to the international protection and promotion of human rights and of fundamental freedoms, including the rights of minorities. The United Nations is the only universal Organization dealing with worldwide standards-setting, protecting human rights and addressing violations of human rights in individual Member States. All those efforts deserve our unqualified support.

Hungary continues to attach particular importance to the protection of the rights of minorities. Regional instruments aimed at improving the situation of national and ethnic minorities have already been adopted to that end without major difficulties. A universal instrument on the rights of minorities has yet to be elaborated. We believe that, given the necessary political will on the part of Member States, the United Nations will be able to fill that gap through an international minority protection system. The more effectively we act, the more beneficial the service that we will be able to provide with respect to protecting vulnerable minority groups through standards and norms.

Hungary stands ready and is willing to join others in redoubling our efforts with regard to strengthening the United Nations system. Multilateral institutions are in serious need of reform, if they are to live up to the expectations of the fast-changing political and economic landscape of our times. The United Nations cannot be an exception to that.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Frederick Mitchell, Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Public Service of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Mitchell (Bahamas): It is my distinct honour, on behalf of the Prime Minister, the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this, its fifty-eighth session. We share in the celebration of the election of a distinguished son of the Caribbean to steer the course of this body for the next year. My delegation pledges its full support to you and to the other members of the Bureau in the performance of that challenging task. I also take this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, from the Czech Republic, for his outstanding leadership of the fifty-seventh session. In addition, I should like to greet and pay tribute to the Secretary-General, who continues to serve with great distinction, honour and exceptional courage. My delegation salutes the Secretary-General for the tremendous amount of work he has undertaken since we last convened this body.

I also wish to pause at this time to pay tribute to Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, the late Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, and to all other United Nations staff members who were killed or wounded in the deadly bombings of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August and 22 September 2003. We feel that loss most deeply. For us, the United Nations is paramount in ensuring the rule of law and justice in an increasingly complex world. An attack on the United Nations is an attack on the principles that bind us together as an international community. We must stand firm against efforts to undermine those principles. There is no finer tribute to those who lost their lives than to say today: Now, more than ever before, we need the United Nations.

Such events remind us that the world is changing dramatically. It is imperative that we, as an Organization, be able to respond to those changes quickly and appropriately. The Bahamas welcomes the ongoing efforts to revitalize the General Assembly and to reform the Security Council. It is essential that those principal bodies be able to function effectively if we are to have any credibility and if we are to attain our goals of maintaining international peace, security, justice and development.

As we are all too well aware, the process of reform of the Security Council has stalled, as we

remain deadlocked over critical issues. The time has come for us to take hard decisions and to agree to a practical programme of reform that takes fully into account the need for more representative membership as well as the need for a more democratic and transparent Council. My delegation has raised those issues in a number of bilateral discussions with other concerned States, and we look forward to working with the presidency and with other delegations as we strive to rationalize the work of the entire Organization, while making it more transparent and accountable.

While the problems in our own part of the world may not have received as much international attention as have conflicts in other parts of the world, their resolution is of paramount importance to us. The Caribbean is our home, and we will spare no effort to protect it against those who seek to destabilize the region. The illegal transit of drugs, of weapons and of human beings is an affront to us and a serious challenge to our national and regional security.

The Bahamas is grateful for the support that the region has obtained from the international community in addressing these areas, but reminds Members that we need to continue to be vigilant. We urge the Assembly to enhance its cooperation with the Organization of American States (OAS), as that regional body strives to find solutions to difficult problems involving territorial disputes between its member States and as it seeks to promote human rights and to consolidate the foundations of democracy in a number of those States. In that context, we welcome the OAS Special Mission for Strengthening Democracy in Haiti as a demonstration of the region's commitment to this field.

The Bahamas is strongly committed to the further strengthening of international efforts to prevent, combat and eliminate terrorism in all its ugly forms, and supports the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the elaboration of a draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism. We are continuously reviewing our national legislation in order to strengthen it in those areas, with particular emphasis on cracking down on the financing of terrorism. Even now, a terrorism bill is before our Parliament. It will further strengthen the laws that limit the ability of those who would commit such acts to obtain monies to fund their activities. The commitment of the Bahamas in this fight is unyielding.

The fight against the forces that would seek to undermine the rule of law in order to achieve political objectives has forced each country to review its commitment to freedom within and outside its borders and to determine how to protect the freedom that our citizens so dearly cherish.

Last year, in our address to the Assembly, the Bahamas reminded this body that, in our quest for security, we must not undermine the very values we want to protect, preserve and defend. But it is clear that our conventions and established and respected traditions are being challenged before our very eyes, and we must be careful to guard against this while ensuring that all of us are safe.

The Caribbean as a whole is perhaps more sensitive than any other region to these issues of change and the implications for the way of life that we enjoy, characterized as it is by an abiding respect for the privacy of the individual. It should be remembered that most of us in the region are small island developing States, which are especially vulnerable in security and economic issues. But, at the same time, our peoples are fiercely proud of our independence and the traditions of freedom connected therewith.

Nowhere is the paradox of the pressure on our now independent status more sensitive and apparent than in the exercise of a presumptive legal authority by a body of powerful, but faceless, un-elected bureaucrats, being advanced from some of the developed world's multilateral bodies, which, in the view of many, threaten to re-impose the status of dependence, without calling it so by name, and thereby undermining our economies.

In that connection, the Bahamas is particularly concerned, along with its regional neighbours, about the threats to its way of life, in particular as it is underpinned by the legitimate wealth creation in its financial services sector. There are those who argue that the financial services sectors in our region undermine economic development and wealth creation in developed States, but we maintain that the evidence shows that the wealth accumulation facilitated by the financial services sectors in the region assists in the further development and economic growth of the developed world. Our country is committed to fair and equitable trade in services on a level playing field with established rules, without ever-changing goal posts.

Over the next year, we shall endeavour to bring this matter more clearly into focus by calling, in this and other assemblies, for the convening of a global forum on the pressures being applied to small and vulnerable States in ways that threaten the independence of these countries and, which some argue, is unlawful interference in the internal affairs of a nation-State. It is imperative that any rule-making forum on these issues be open to all Member States of this body. Similarly, all rules emanating therefrom must be equitably applied.

And so, as we bring these matters to the attention of the world, we repeat the obvious. The fight against international terrorism must be a major focal point of the Assembly, as should other matters such as the fight against HIV/AIDS, the protection of the environment and the sustainable development of our fragile ecosystems.

The Bahamas is committed to fighting on all of these fronts. It is especially concerned about the future of the world's children and young people, as HIV/AIDS threatens to undermine decades and centuries of progress in healthcare and in developing healthy populations that facilitate economic growth throughout the world. The Bahamas is a leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the region. We urge the continued and unrelenting fight against the disease, to rescue the world's developing nations from the clutches of this most recent scourge. It must take all of the political will and financial power of the world's nations to ensure that the scourge is brought under control and then eliminated.

The Bahamas welcomes the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children, held from 8 to 10 May 2002. We look forward to participating in the consideration of the follow-up to its outcome at this session. It is of critical importance that we reaffirm our commitment to implementing the provisions of the outcome document, "Building a world fit for children", in the four priority areas of health, education, protection of children from abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS. Our country and its people are especially concerned, even as I speak, about the safety and security, both physical and economic, of children everywhere, but in particular children in the Bahamas today, and about the need to foster an atmosphere of love and care so that they may grow into their rightful places in the adult world.

The Bahamas, as do many of the small island developing States, depends heavily on the environment, which is the natural beauty of the land, the sea and marine life. Tourism is our lifeblood. For the region, the natural environment is the primary source of sustenance and, therefore, we cannot allow our environment to be destroyed. Doing so threatens our very survival. We are, therefore, acutely aware of the challenges small island developing States face within the context of achieving sustainable development. The sustainable development of our country therefore remains of critical importance to the Government and thus, we, as a matter of the highest priority, continue to take steps to preserve and protect our environment.

We are also committed to working with all the other small island developing States and the other members of this Organization, civil society and all other concerned stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, to ensure that the Barbados Programme of Action is fully implemented. In that regard, the Bahamas welcomes the convening of the international meeting to review the Barbados Programme of Action, which is to take place in Mauritius in 2004, and we are proud to host the interregional preparatory meeting in Nassau, which will be held prior to that, from 26 to 30 January 2004. It is our hope that the renewed commitment to this international meeting by all Member States will take us a step closer to honouring our commitment to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

It is an inescapable fact that there can be no social or economic development without security. For many of us in the Caribbean in particular, this security is being undermined by the activities of those trafficking in illegal drugs and weapons. By virtue of its geographical position, the Bahamas continues to be an unwitting transit point for illegal activities, including the illicit trade in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. What is often overlooked by those who are the consuming countries is that the Bahamas neither produces these substances, nor does it produce guns, nor is it the final destination for them.

However, as a trans-shipment point, the Bahamas is suffering from a plethora of illegal activities associated with this trade, including the deadly nexus between illicit drugs and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. These weapons, which are illegal in the Bahamas, are contributing to an increase in violent

crime in my country and they are undermining the economic and social fabric of our nation.

We, therefore, welcome the convening of the first Biennial Meeting of States to consider the Implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in July of this year. At the same time, we call on developed countries to take the same extraordinary measures they use in seeking to stop drug trafficking into their countries, to stop illegal small arms from reaching our shores from their countries.

We believe that the Charter constitutes a viable and firm foundation on which the Organization can balance and achieve its objectives — to maintain international peace and security and promote economic and social progress. I wish to reaffirm the Bahamas' commitment to the principles enshrined in that universal document, which will stand as a guiding beacon as we continue to chart a rocky, yet crucial, course towards peace, security and sustainable development for all of the world's inhabitants. While progress may seem meagre, we must not be swayed from our course, and we must remain confident that the benefits of our activities and efforts will redound to future generations. Now more than ever, the world needs the United Nations.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergei Martynov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

Mr. Martynov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): To begin, I would sincerely like to congratulate you on your election to this very important and difficult position as President of the Assembly and I wish you every success.

This year, the United Nations has come close to the most dangerous brink in its more than a half-century of history. This is not only and not so much the Iraqi crisis per se. That crisis has become but a manifestation of what has really threatened the entire system of world order created after World War II. The basis of this world order is the unconditional primacy of international law over the aspirations of individual States.

Take that away, and the world will again, as in centuries past, become hostage to the power of the mighty. This will not merely throw us backward. The beginning of the twenty-first century differs from past decades and centuries in that the existence of a single global super-Power will make the rule of the mighty global in both scale and consequence.

> "We all have to recognize — no matter how great our strength — that we must deny ourselves the license to do always as we please. ... Unless we are all willing to pay that price, no organization for world peace can accomplish its purpose".

These words, spoken by United States President Harry Truman, are as urgent today as they were back in 1945. We call upon everyone to be guided by them today as they were when our Organization was being set up.

Belarus' contribution to the creation of the United Nations and a new system of international security was one-third of our population, who gave their lives for the victory of peace over war and the victory of the coalition of the future over the coalition of the past. That is exactly why we in Belarus today sense with special urgency the danger of the erosion of a just and stable world order.

Let us preserve the coalition of the entire world for global peace. Let us not allow the Security Council, as the main body for maintaining peace and security, to be replaced by "coalitions of the willing" that use force without Council authorization. Let us not forget that only a just peace can prove to be a stable peace.

Belarus welcomes the emerging effort to return to the United Nations its legitimate role in settling the Iraq issue. This reflects the recognition that a military force or an occupying force cannot solve the problem of nation-building. We hope that this will also become recognition of the fact that a preventive war makes a poor foundation for security.

We hope that a new Security Council resolution on Iraq being worked out now will strengthen the central role of the United Nations in the earliest and urgent return to the people of Iraq of its sovereignty, its right to independently determine its political future and its right to natural resources, so that constitutional processes and later election processes can be implemented by Iraqis in the interest of Iraqis.

At the same time, Belarus is worried by the pattern that is dangerous both for the future of the United Nations and for international peace and is taking shape on the most urgent issues: the Security Council and the United Nations are ignored when

unauthorized military action is taken, and are then invited back only in the aftermath, when their authority, experience and resources are seen as essential for rebuilding a peaceful life. That is what happened in Kosovo and what is happening in Iraq today.

Belarus believes in the United Nations. We believe that it has a central role to play in the most urgent issues of today and that it cannot be replaced. We believe in the constant values and justice of the supremacy of international law and the fundamental principles of its Charter. New global challenges and threats merely reaffirm that these values are indispensable.

As a founding Member of the United Nations, Belarus sees the need to modernize and adapt the United Nations mechanisms and structures to the realities of this new century.

Of special importance is the reform of the United Nations Security Council. As has been correctly noted by the Secretary-General, it is not only a question of enlarging the Council's membership. Life itself has put on the agenda of the reform process many other aspects, including the Council's capacity to react to threats to peace and security.

It is essential to achieve a reasonable balance in the interrelationship between the main United Nations bodies, inherent in its Charter. A stronger role of the General Assembly is an important direction for increasing the Organization's efficiency.

The potential of the presidency of the General Assembly is underused. As an officer elected by the entire United Nations, the President of the General Assembly can and should be called upon to serve as a catalyst and organizer in searching for solutions to the problems the world and the Organization are facing.

It is necessary to reform and improve the activities of the Economic and Social Council as the coordinator of United Nations efforts in economic, social and related areas. Having accumulated considerable experience working in the Bureau of the Council, the Republic of Belarus is ready to make a constructive contribution to these efforts. Those were exactly the considerations that guided Belarus when it proposed its candidature to Council membership for 2004-2006.

The United Nations should pay priority attention to developing international law: new realities in international politics as well as new universal world problems have to be taken into consideration. Belarus is a party to all key multilateral treaties regulating various spheres of international life. This year we have acceded to a further number of such treaties, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols.

The international fight against terrorism that unfolded after the tragic events of 11 September 2001 rightly placed the United Nations in the centre of antiterrorist efforts. The work of the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee has helped in the forming of a global coalition under the aegis of the United Nations to counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

We must, however, be realistic: force alone can never eradicate the abominable phenomenon of terrorism, at least, not forever. Injustice, inequality and indifference will bring it forth again and again, just like the accumulation of electricity in the atmosphere produces a lightning bolt. The Secretary-General is right when he states that in order to maintain a genuinely global coalition for fighting terrorism the world must also see progress on other fronts of the struggle for a humane and just world order. Herein lies an important challenge for the United Nations, for permanent members of the Security Council and for all Members of the Organization.

The principal contribution of Belarus to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and to conventional disarmament has been universally recognized. Our concern is therefore all the greater with regard to the gradual erosion of multilateral norms in disarmament and the stagnation of the international bodies, above all the negotiation mechanisms, in charge of international security and disarmament.

From this rostrum, we join in the appeal not to allow the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This is a most important task. It should be noted, that for many years, Belarus has initiated efforts to prevent the development of new types of such weapons. However, has everything possible been done in recent years, including by the most militarily powerful States, to strengthen the multilateral non-proliferation regime in all its most important aspects? Is everything being done to that end today? An appropriate answer to that

question would be the ratification by all permanent members of the Security Council of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The activities of multilateral bodies in the area of disarmament should be adapted to new realities. We proceed from the assumption that the United Nations should draw up a clear-cut list of priority directions in ensuring international security and generate programmes to overcome real threats to mankind. The resolutions we adopt should contain clear directives to existing forums and structures in the areas of international security, arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. Only with this approach will we be able to stop the devaluation of such notions as peace, security and stability.

I wish to inform delegations that Belarus has recently taken another responsible step to strengthen these values. While possessing the world's seventh largest arsenal of anti-personnel landmines, the Republic of Belarus has joined the Ottawa Convention on their prohibition. We count on international assistance in their elimination.

The norms of international law play a principled role in shaping a just international economic order. The objective of providing equal access to world markets and to the benefits of the process of globalization for all States, particularly developing countries and countries with economies in transition, has unfortunately not been achieved. That is why we urge Member States to pay unabated attention to the process of developing the norms and rules of international trade and commercial activities in the interests of common well-being.

After the recent failure of the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Cancún, the leading economic Powers should understand the risks of delaying the negotiations within the WTO both on the issue of new rules as well as on the problem of new membership. One should not forget that providing an opportunity to all States to use the benefits of the multilateral trading system is in the long-term interests of peace, security and stability.

I wish to inform the General Assembly that, as its contribution to ensuring access for developing countries and least developed countries to the world market, Belarus has made a decision to extend unilateral trade preferences to a large number of such States. Our country's National Centre of Technology Transfer has a high potential for innovation and is ready for extensive cooperation with all interested States. Its institutional capacities are intended to meet not only our requirements, but the interests of developing countries as well.

Let me touch upon the problem of the consequences of the largest technogenic catastrophe of the twentieth century, the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. We are grateful to the leadership of the Secretariat for its ongoing activities to mobilize international support in that direction. This year has been marked by the establishment of the International Chernobyl Research and Information Network and of the international Chernobyl Forum by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Jointly with the delegations of other affected States, we have prepared for this session a draft resolution on strengthening international cooperation and coordination of efforts in studying, mitigating and minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. The document seeks to ensure the implementation of a new United Nations strategy on Chernobyl. We hope that it will be supported by all delegations.

The Republic of Belarus also proposes an initiative to hold in Minsk in 2006 an international conference timed to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. The main objectives of the conference will be the search for ways to provide normal living conditions to people living in affected areas and an exchange of experiences in solving the problems of sustainable development in those regions. We invite all interested Member States and international organizations to take part in preparing and holding this event.

In the area of counteracting international crime, the fight against human trafficking and illegal drug trafficking should become one of the United Nations priorities. Our country has been actively participating in international efforts to stop the modern slave and drug trades. Located at the crossroads of the most important transportation corridors between Asia and Europe, Belarus offers efficient interaction in solving these problems with all our neighbours and, especially, with the European Union. Common efforts are needed to fight common problems; that way, everybody wins.

The global scope of problems demands a global scale of interaction involving all States without exception. Mankind made itself the master of the world after having become homo sapiens — sentient man. In order to become the master of its destiny, and not a hostage to challenges and threats, humanity should become *humanitas sapiens* — sentient humanity.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Kikwete (United Republic of Tanzania): It gives me great pleasure on behalf of my delegation to extend to you, Sir, our heartfelt congratulations on your well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. My delegation is particularly pleased at the way you have been conducting the work of the Assembly thus far. The skills and experience that you bring to the Assembly have been amply proven in the past days of our deliberations. I wish to assure you of the continued support and cooperation of my delegation.

Let me use this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for a job well done during the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

In the same vein, I wish to pay tribute to our illustrious Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his valiant efforts in bringing the United Nations closer to the people and in fostering peace and development around the world. He is discharging the functions of his high office in such a manner that he has won the hearts and minds of many people the world over.

This fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly is being held at a very momentous time in the history of the United Nations — a time when multilateralism is facing serious threats and a time when the United Nations, the main embodiment of multilateralism, has been confronting formidable challenges. Never in history have the relevance and mandate of the United Nations been put to a greater test as in the past few months.

Certainly, the tumultuous events of the past months have shaken the very foundation of our Organization, but fortunately have not broken it. We are comforted by the fact that the United Nations has withstood the test of time and emerged as not only relevant, but indispensable in keeping world peace. Likewise, multilateralism has stood out as the only hope for all peoples. As we celebrate the United Nations and its success, we should always remember that it is our solidarity and steadfast adherence to the ideals of the United Nations that have made our Organization survive the trials and turbulence of the past year.

I assure the Assembly that the Government and people of the United Republic of Tanzania take pride in Tanzania's membership of the United Nations. We remain committed to its ideals and ready to work tirelessly towards its advancement, strengthening and success.

Peace and security still eludes the world, as guns and explosives continue to thunder and cries of agony continue to be heard across the continents. These days, violations of human rights have become common occurrences, even among the developed countries of the world. Wars continue to rage, with Africa and Asia, sadly, claiming the largest share. Acts of terror, too, continue to resonate all over the world. Since the last General Assembly session, for example, terrorists have struck in 12 countries.

As a country that has been a victim of international terrorism, Tanzania condemns terrorism, whatever the reason and wherever it takes place. My Government remains committed to the war against terror. In this regard, we will continue to cooperate with world Governments and institutions of goodwill to defeat terrorism. I take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that Tanzania has ratified all the major anti-terrorism protocols. We have also enacted a comprehensive legislation to deal with terrorism and terrorist acts in our country.

It is very saddening to note that even the United Nations has become a target of terrorist attacks, as exemplified by the recent tragic bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, which resulted in the death of 23 United Nations staff members, including the charismatic diplomat and chief of mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello and his chief of staff, Nadia Younes. Once again, we condemn this senseless act, while joining in mourning our fallen heroes. They died for the United Nations. They risked their lives and died for a just cause, for which they will be remembered for ever in the history of our Organization. Tanzania proposes that the United Nations erect a fitting memorial in their honour and memory.

I mentioned earlier that Africa has had an unfair share of violent conflicts and wars, especially when one considers the rampant poverty and low levels of development on the continent. However, I dare say, with a sense of guarded optimism, that we see a glimmer of hope in the evolutions of processes to resolve some of Africa's seemingly intractable conflicts. I have in mind the conflicts in Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, the Sudan and Somalia, where encouraging progress has been recorded on the path to finding lasting solutions. The most welcome development in these conflicts, however, is the fact that African nations and leaders have taken the lead in the search for solutions. They have done so under the auspices of the African Union or their regional economic groupings. In several cases, they have also intervened as individuals or as groups of neighbours or like-minded nations and leaders.

Tanzania appreciates the support of the United Nations and the international community for the efforts made by African nations and leaders in the search for peace on the continent. We appeal for continued support to sustain the peace in the reconstruction phase. Equally important, I appeal for timely support and action. Experience has shown that the support of the international community, including the United Nations, in the search for solutions to African conflicts is a bit too slow, or comes a bit too late.

My delegation is extremely pleased to have been a witness, on 25 September, of the adoption of the principles of good-neighbourly relations and cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. It is a welcome initiative. We commend the Secretary-General for conceiving the idea. Once again, I register Tanzania's support for the initiative and promise that we shall do whatever is within our means to promote its success.

I would also like to take this opportunity to call on the international community to extend the necessary political, economic and financial support to the Transitional Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, under the leadership of President Joseph Kabila. We consider this critical to keep up the momentum and avoid reversals.

The situation in Burundi, regrettably, remains precarious. While we welcome the smooth transfer of power from President Buyoya to President Ndayizeye, we also take note of positive developments under the Transitional Government. However, the Government and people of Burundi need to be supported to achieve comprehensive peace and social and economic reconstruction. The regional leaders have been trying to help on the peace front and will continue to do so. Some progress has been made, but serious challenges still lie ahead.

The unrelenting support of the international community, especially the Security Council, is therefore essential. We also call on the international community to do more by way of extending economic and financial support to the Transitional Government of Burundi. It needs that support to effectively respond to the humanitarian needs in the country.

My Government welcomes the decision by the United Nations to convene the long awaited international conference on the Great Lakes region. Preparations are progressing well under the able leadership of Mr. Ibrahima Fall, the Secretary-General's special representative for the Great Lakes region. There is good cooperation between him, the African Union and the six core countries of the region. Tanzania feels greatly honoured to be given the opportunity to host the Conference in June 2004. We stand ready to contribute to its success.

The Conference will undoubtedly provide an important forum to all concerned parties to deliberate on important issues of peace, stability and development in the region. We also hope that it will give due focus to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the war-torn countries. I appeal to all in the United Nations to extend the requisite material, financial, political and diplomatic support to the Conference.

We welcome the latest Baker Plan on resolving the long-standing Western Sahara problem. We appeal to the parties to extend the maximum possible cooperation to Mr. Baker so that the people of Western Sahara can have an opportunity to determine their future peacefully.

Owing to our strategic position in a conflict-ridden region, and our history of stability and traditional hospitality, Tanzania has played host to thousands of refugees from neighbouring countries. The influx began in 1959 and has not stopped to date. At present, we play host to more than 800,000 refugees from Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia. We remain committed to our international obligations under the 1951 Geneva

Convention relating to the Status of Refugees as the cornerstone of international protection. However, our 42 years of experience of hosting refugees have made us see the urgent need to review its relevance and application. We are particularly concerned with the concept and practice of burden-sharing, which does not adequately alleviate the burden of hosting refugees in poor developing countries like ours. We welcome the new concept of "Convention Plus" espoused by the High Commissioner for Refugees. We hope that new and emerging realities will be given serious thought in the discussions and conclusions of the High Commissioner's Executive Committee.

The situation in the Middle East remains a matter of great concern to my Government. When the Middle East road map for peace was promulgated a few months ago, we became hopeful. My Government supported it because it addressed comprehensively the issue of the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, living side by side and in peace with Israel. Despite the current difficulties, we still believe that the road map is the most reasonable and viable way of resolving the long-standing Israel-Palestine conflict. It is imperative, therefore, that the obstacles on the road map be overcome quickly. Violence and counter-violence will not help.

We are also of the view that the use of excessive force and recourse to extrajudicial measures in dealing with Palestinian militants, or exiling President Yasser Arafat, would be counterproductive; it would inflame the situation. We appeal to the Quartet and the Security Council to do everything possible to bring the implementation of the road map back on track.

As we all remember, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the General Assembly at a special session discussed the challenge of poverty and development. At the end we came up with the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, which embodied a vision of engaging in a comprehensive offensive against poverty, deprivation and lack of development. The clear target of halving the scourge of poverty by 2015 was set.

When we look back and evaluate what has been achieved in the three years since the Millennium Summit, we cannot fail to discover that not much has been done. Provision of the estimated $50 billion to $100 billion additional resources required annually over a period of 15 years to finance the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals is far from being realized. The subsequent meetings in Monterrey and Johannesburg, as well as the successive G-8 summits, have been unable to meet the requirement. As it stands now, the Millennium Development Goals risk not being implemented as expected. Indeed, something needs to be done quickly to save that historic summit. It is incumbent upon the developed countries to demonstrate greater political will. Certainly failure will not be good for our Organization and surely it will be bad for all of us.

The current wave of globalization is the greatest economic process of our time. The unfortunate collapse of the World Trade Organization meeting in Cancún last month demands that we face up to this phenomenon. We hope that summit will be reconvened soon. The social imperative of the wave of globalization presents us with two interlinked challenges that are central to the work of this Organization. These pertain, on the one hand, to fighting poverty, and on the other, to working on constructive and inclusive measures to promote the effectiveness of global institutions in global issues and conflicts.

These concerns have also been at the centre of the work of the World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization, established last year under the auspices of the International Labour Organization (ILO), with a mandate to promote social justice and decent work, linked to economic and social policies for global prosperity. This World Commission, which my President is privileged to co-chair with President Tarja Halonen of Finland, is about to complete its work and is due to submit its report early next year.

The Commission has been a forum of useful dialogue between eminent personalities with a wide cross-section of backgrounds, views and competencies. It has consulted widely and extensively. Its report is expected to generate practical ideas for change that can make the process of globalization more inclusive and more equitable. It will address the needs of those who feel marginalized, as well as those who have benefited from globalization but feel uncertain about the future. It will speak of the significance of a value-based multilateralism and the role of this Organization.

However, the recommendations, mandate and vision of the work of the Commission will not be

undertaken, pursued and achieved through the work of the ILO alone. They will constitute a wide remit for other agencies of the United Nations, other multilateral agencies, regional groupings, individual Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society. It is also hoped that the report will be submitted to this Assembly for consideration and appropriate promotional direction.

It is the hope of my delegation that the Commission's report will be a welcome basis for collective and concerted action towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and in rendering globalization a process that works for all, in all countries, within countries and between countries.

I would like to associate myself with the statement made this morning by the Permanent Representative of Finland concerning the launching of a Helsinki process on global governance and democracy, with which my Government feels proud to be associated.

The fight against AIDS remains a major challenge to mankind today. It is a war that we must fight and win. We realize the dire consequences of the pandemic on human life and on our economies. The high-level plenary meeting held last week was reassuring and most of us came away from the session modestly optimistic. Certainly, our resolve to squarely face up to the pandemic and to meet the set targets has to be coupled with equal responsibility for leadership initiatives, accountability and more judicious resource mobilization and management.

Mr. Lamba (Malawi), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Reform of the United Nations Security Council has been in the cards for some time now. Tanzania is convinced that the reform of the Security Council is desirable, to make this important organ of our Organization more representative, more democratic, more transparent and more measured in the conduct of its business. We believe that this will go a long way towards renewing the confidence and support of Member States in the relevance and effectiveness of the Organization.

Tanzania accepts the truism that reform is a process and not an event. We support the establishment of the high-level panel of eminent personalities to review the functioning of major organs of the United Nations. We look forward to its early constitution. We attach special importance to this process and promise to play our part.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Laurie Chan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Solomon Islands.

Mr. Chan (Solomon Islands): I present the warm wishes of the Government and people of Solomon Islands on the election of Mr. Julian Hunte as President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I also offer gratitude to his predecessor for presiding over the last session.

And we salute the Secretary-General for his bold leadership of our Organization. Through him, Solomon Islands wishes to pay tribute to the members of the United Nations staff and others who lost their lives during the senseless attack on the United Nations office in Baghdad last August and the recent incident a few days ago.

Fifty-eight years ago, the United Nations was founded to, among others things, guarantee freedom, peace and security and to promote economic and social advancement to all people. Over the years, many threats to international peace and security have receded or been resolved. The cold war has ended. Security and arms control regimes are in place. Institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and others have been established to address the economic and social dimension of humankind's needs.

In spite of these significant achievements, peace, security and our quest for sustained economic and social development remain the main challenges of our time. New and complex threats to international peace and security have emerged at alarming and global scales during the past decades.

International terrorism continues unabated in different parts of the world, targeting and killing mainly innocent and vulnerable civilians. There can be no other option but for the international community to redouble efforts to fight this evil menace on all fronts. Solomon Islands remains committed to its obligations under Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). Steps are being taken to enact relevant legislation and to accede to international conventions to counter terrorist activities.

Solomon Islands believes that a lasting settlement of the crisis in the Middle East will have positive

effects on global peace and security. We therefore support the efforts to bring lasting peace and stability to the region, especially to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the situation in Iraq. The United Nations must play a crucial role in the Middle East peace process.

The primary responsibility of addressing the daunting challenges we face today lies with individual countries. However, history proves that much more could be effectively achieved through multilateralism. We all agree that this era of globalization brings new global challenges. And global challenges require cooperative global solutions. The United Nations, as the leading and legitimate multilateral institution, must take equal responsibility in addressing the global challenges we now face and must therefore be strengthened.

This is why Solomon Islands supports the Secretary-General's ongoing reform of the United Nations system as a process, not an event. Yes, the reform process has achieved positive results and greater transparency, but we need to do more if our Organization is to remain effective and relevant to the changing political environment.

A reformed and restructured Security Council is also necessary. Japan, Germany and others deserve permanent membership in the Council. They are equally capable of contributing constructively to achieving and maintaining international peace and security. The use of veto power by the permanent members should be restricted to the provisions of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Restoring law and order, economic recovery and simply bringing normalcy to Solomon Islands have been difficult challenges which my Government faced when we took office in December 2001. But having made the commitment to address these challenges through the Government's strategic plan and priorities, we have engaged ourselves in a series of dialogues and consultations with our development partners. Our intentions are clear — we want outside assistance to restore law and order and economic recovery.

Last July, with unanimous bipartisan support, the Solomon Islands National Parliament adopted enabling legislation that authorized outside assistance to restore law and to help the economy to recover. Following an explicit invitation by the Government, the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) led by Australia, was assembled and deployed under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum's Biketawa Declaration and in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

I am pleased to inform you that the immediate impacts of RAMSI have been significant and positive. Security in terms of law and order has been re-established and the Government's finances are beginning to stabilize. The course of action through RAMSI is the best option we took. It is a unique regional cooperative and partnership arrangement that is not merely limited to re-establishing and maintaining peace and security. It accords Solomon Islanders the best real opportunity to rebuild the country and address the deep-rooted problems we have had for years, including fighting corruption, restoring the principles of democracy, good governance and respect for fundamental human values and rejuvenating the social cohesiveness of our people.

RAMSI's work ahead will be challenging, but we assure RAMSI of every support and cooperation. The Government and the people of the Solomon Islands are equally committed to achieving this common objective.

We deeply appreciate the overwhelming support of the Pacific Islands Forum countries, expressed through the Forum Declaration on the Solomon Islands, the Forum Foreign Affairs Ministerial Statement and their active contribution as Participating Countries in the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). These countries are committed in their resolve to help a neighbour recover and rebuild. For this, I say "Tagio tumas for helpem fren blong iufala".

We also appreciate the support RAMSI has received from the wider international community, the Commonwealth, the United Nations, the European Union and other individual bilateral donor partners. We look forward to more active support to complement the important work RAMSI is doing in addressing the immediate and long-term objectives and plans.

The Government's National Economic Recovery and Development Plan of 2003 to 2005 will be formally presented to our development partners in November. Our immediate objectives are to restore and maintain law and order, to bring about macroeconomic

Note: Solomon Islands pidgin for: "Thank you for helping your friend".

stability and income growth, to restore full services in health and education and to re-establish the foundation for sustained economic growth and human development.

While the immediate security situation and economic situation of the country are being addressed by RAMSI, the planned November meeting will provide the opportunity for the rest of our development partners to define their respective roles and assistance towards achieving these key objectives.

As a least developed and island State, our economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities are major constraints to achieving sustainable economic growth and livelihoods. But we place our hope on greater international support and partnership to address these constraints in order to meaningfully and successfully implement our national development plans and such key policy outcomes as the 2000 Millennium Development Goals, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and other programmes within the development agenda of the United Nations.

Implementation of the 2000 Millennium Development Goals has been slow. We have, however, now incorporated those objectives into the Government's Economic Recovery and Development Plan of 2003 to 2005, as priorities for national implementation.

The Solomon Islands looks forward to participating fully in the review process of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. We envisage the outcome of the 2004 international meeting in Mauritius to be one that will focus on real commitments and practical implementations of the Programme at the national and regional levels.

The Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) provides yet another opportunity and dimension for addressing the pressing problems facing poor countries. Implementation of this Programme at the national level has been slow. Real commitments from the international community to address our constraints, including capacity and indebtedness, have, however, not been forthcoming either.

We commend the work of the High Representative of the Office for the Least Developed Countries in seeking international support and commitment to implement the Programme. We further call on the international community to seriously consider more resolute measures, such as cancellation of debts to highly indebted poor countries.

As a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Solomon Islands is equally concerned that the Cancún meeting failed to yield positive results. Like other least developed countries, we have a key interest in the development dimension of the Doha Round, and we wish to re-echo what we stated in Cancún, namely that a new, equitable and fair trading system must take into account issues such as the difference in income, economic size, technological development and private sector capacities of countries.

The Solomon Islands attaches great importance to regional cooperation. The communiqué of the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum last August, which has been made available as an official document of the fifty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, reflects the range of issues that directly concern us in the Pacific region. Those issues include climate change and sea-level rise, fisheries and the protection of our marine environment, trade, sustainable development and security-related issues. As small States with inherent geographical and structural disadvantages, our strength lies in pooling our resources to address these issues collectively. We call upon the United Nations to take more active part in regional initiatives.

Allow me at this juncture to express once more our strong support for Taiwan to be admitted as a full member of the United Nations. It is an undeniable fact that under international law, Taiwan is a sovereign state. It has a transparent and democratic political system, a vibrant and progressive economy and a highly efficient social system, all of which are completely independent with no control whatsoever exercised by the People's Republic of China.

Taiwan is a willing partner, able to meet its international obligations under the Charter. Its contribution to the international community and the global economy are well known. Yet only a fortnight ago, this body once again denied the wishes of the people of Taiwan to be considered for membership in the United Nations. Over the years the international community has discriminated against its 23 million people. The delayed World Health Organization

assistance to Taiwan during the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome early this year is an example of how reasons of power politics prevail over timely humanitarian assistance.

I have made the assertion that the United Nations must remain relevant to the changing political environment. It must live up to the fundamental values and principles enshrined in its Charter. It must remain a universal and all-inclusive Organization, capable of serving all its Members, however big or small, however powerful or weak and of whatever creed, religion or political belief. Every country must be treated with equal respect and attention. The United Nations must also live up to its principle of equality of all nations in this new millennium.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Natan Teewe, Minister for Communications, Transport and Tourism Development of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Teewe (Kiribati): Allow me at the outset to offer Mr. Julian Hunte my warm congratulations on his election as President. We are confident that he will guide our deliberations during this fifty-eighth session to a productive conclusion. Let me also express my deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for his effective guidance of the work of the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

Four years ago Kiribati joined the United Nations as one of its youngest Member States. Our membership of the United Nations was an affirmation of our faith in and support for the noble principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Since then, events have occurred to test the resolve of this Organization. Indeed, the United Nations has faced many challenges. The recent brutal and calculated attack on United Nations personnel in Baghdad, which resulted in a tragic loss of life and many injuries, are to be condemned. We mourn the loss of the Secretary-General's senior representative, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and the others who perished in the attacks.

Kiribati commends the Secretary-General for his unwavering determination to ensure that the United Nations continues to perform the role we expect of it in the international arena.

We have followed with increasing alarm the globalization of terror. No longer can we in the Pacific claim immunity from terrorism. The consequences of terrorist acts are abhorrent. Kiribati condemns terrorism and all acts of terror directed against innocent people. We cannot condone acts of terror, regardless of their purported objective.

Even though we have not been, and may never be, directly subjected to horrors such as that of 11 September 2001 and the terrorist acts in Riyadh, Jakarta and Baghdad, we realize that terrorism knows no boundaries or limitations. It is a crime against humanity and against the international community as a whole, and we must therefore work collectively to defeat it. To do so will require an international response backed by concerted regional and national efforts.

At the international level, Kiribati fully supports the relevant Security Council resolutions against terrorism. The Pacific Islands Forum is actively addressing security issues at the regional level. Despite financial constraints, Kiribati is pleased to have contributed, within the framework of the 2000 Biketawa Declaration, police personnel to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands. My Government decided to contribute to that initiative because of our firm belief in the strength of regional cooperation. The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands is a clear demonstration of the ability of Pacific Island Forum member countries to respond swiftly and cooperatively to requests from fellow member countries for support in restoring law and order.

While Kiribati appreciates the recognition of this regional initiative by the United Nations, we hope and urge that further assistance will be forthcoming to strengthen and ensure the success of this undertaking.

At the national level, Kiribati has introduced various bills and taken other measures as part of its effort to address security challenges. This is an ongoing process that will progress at a pace dictated by our financial situation, personnel and other constraints. We are confident that, given our commitment, and with appropriate assistance from the international community, we will in time achieve our goals.

Kiribati supports the idea that terrorism must be eliminated. We must all fight against those who reject dialogue as a means of securing their objectives and instead resort to terror. We would like to associate ourselves with the many speakers who advocate that

we exercise restraint. We must ensure that in our fight against terrorism we continue to uphold the principles that are the cornerstones of this esteemed body — the principles that we cherish and in which we firmly believe.

Kiribati fully supports efforts to address the security challenges facing the world today. We are, however, mindful that the magnitude of the security challenges facing Member States differs.

In the case of Kiribati there are many challenges and problems that threaten our people and country. Kiribati is one of the least developed countries and is also a small island developing State located in the middle of the Pacific ocean. Our remoteness and insularity, narrow economic base, small population and high population growth rate are factors that we have to accept.

Being a small island developing States poses many challenges to national efforts in terms of sustainable development and beneficial integration into the world economy. These unique characteristics warrant special consideration for sustained and enhanced cooperation from development partners.

Kiribati has benefited, and continues to benefit, from the various programmes offered through the many United Nations agencies. In acknowledging with gratitude the support extended by the United Nations in this regard, I would also like to record our appreciation to our development partners for their continuing support for our efforts at increasing and enhancing the equitable distribution of development benefits to our peoples.

We realize that a lot more needs to be done. Kiribati has a vast exclusive economic zone rich in fisheries and marine resources. We are actively promoting the sustainable exploitation of these resources, and consider the establishment of an onshore fish processing facility to be an appropriate development.

Kiribati comprises low-lying coral atolls and is therefore very vulnerable to climate change, climate variability and sea-level rise. This is an issue of high priority for us, as it is for other low-lying countries. It is also an issue that requires an international response. Political commitment and a high level of cooperation by the international community are called for in addressing this challenge.

There is a need for immediate reductions in and limits on greenhouse gas emissions to bring them into line with the objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We call upon the major emitters of greenhouse gases to ratify the Kyoto Protocol in a timely manner.

We recognize the need to develop and implement appropriate adaptation response measures, and call for support in this respect from international sources, including the Global Environment Facility.

International support will similarly be required in the joint implementation of the vulnerability and adaptation Pacific type 2 initiatives, launched last year at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

We look forward to the 2004 international meeting to be held in Mauritius. This will provide a valuable opportunity to the international community to take stock of what has happened since Rio and Barbados. We certainly hope that Mauritius will provide a road map of concrete and practical actions, which are required to achieve the objectives of the Programme of Action. While we accept primary responsibility for our own development, we also realize that the achievement of such aspirations will be beyond our reach if we have to work alone. We require the assistance of our partners in development.

These have been turbulent times for the United Nations. Recent events have brought to the fore the need for the United Nations to adapt. The rapidly changing global environment in which the United Nations operates demands adaptations if the Organization is to continue to be of relevance to Member States.

Kiribati joins previous speakers in welcoming the reform initiatives outlined by the Secretary-General. We realize that Member States must direct and actively support the adaptation process. The direction and support thus accorded to the United Nations will enable it to become more responsive to the aspirations of its Member States and those of the communities and peoples they represent.

Kiribati fully supports the view that the United Nations and its major organs should be more representative and more democratic in order to reflect the expanded membership of the Organization. The rules so appropriate to situations in the 1940s cannot be

applied practically and effectively in the twenty-first century.

To conclude, we are faced with new challenges. We must commit ourselves to tackling these emerging challenges meaningfully. We must therefore be ready to introduce and accept changes appropriate to our times.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Jean-Marc Hoscheit, Chairman of the delegation of Luxembourg.

Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Ms. Lydie Polfer, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, regrets that she is not able to speak to the Assembly today and has asked me to do so in her place.

The current President of the European Union, Mr. Silvio Berlusconi, has already presented to the Assembly the priorities and positions of the European Union, which Luxembourg supports with conviction.

The United Nations remains in mourning following the cowardly and inhuman attack of 19 August 2003 against United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, which took the lives of 22 persons — most of whom were United Nations personnel — including that of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Today our thoughts are with those victims, who, day after day, through their work in the service of the Organization, helped to make the world a better place.

As was recently noted by the Secretary-General, that heinous act raises important questions, because it is

> "a direct challenge to the vision of world solidarity and of collective security rooted in the Charter and articulated in the Millennium Declaration". *(A/58/323, chapter I, para. 2)*

It is our responsibility, as representatives of the nations of the world, gathered here at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, to meet this challenge and to try to provide constructive answers that open prospects for the future.

A few months ago, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Lydie Polfer, presented to the Luxembourg Parliament her foreign policy declaration in a context characterized by the deep divisions in the international community that marked the international situation at the beginning of this year. At that time, Ms. Polfer elaborated on these thoughts, which also define the overall approach of the Luxembourg Government to multilateral cooperation.

> "During the debates on Iraq, all sides extensively debated the role and the credibility of our shared institutions. Have they shown their limits? Have they ceased to function? Are they still adapted to our day and age? Is multilateralism still relevant today? I would like to give a clear answer to this question. Yes, more than ever, we need multilateral bodies that allow us to work together so that international law can be established and respected, with international rules and procedures that ensure respect for human rights and that govern the lives of all States, regardless of their size. This is not just wishful thinking, but something that is in our interest.
>
> "We must not only assist in the development of these institutions, but also participate actively in strengthening them through committed and constructive cooperation. The United Nations is, of course, the primary forum for such cooperation to take place".

But while we believe that multilateral cooperation remains the best way of dealing with the many current international issues, we must, however, reflect on ways and means of adapting such cooperation to the evolution of our world, with a view to defining a new multilateralism for the twenty-first century and to rethinking the conditions of a new kind of global governance. In this context, the Millennium Declaration charts a steady course that will enable us to mobilize the international community to take action on a number of specific, quantifiable objectives.

Among recent advances, I would like to highlight in particular the achievements registered at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly under the leadership of President Kavan; we commend the innovative work he did during his presidency of the General Assembly. We wish also to stress the process of reflection that was inspired by the Brahimi report on peacekeeping operations.

Much work remains to be done, however. The two recent reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and on the strengthening of the United Nations provide them with both an analytical

framework and an operational plan of action of vital importance. We must provide them with concrete follow-up.

The United Nations must remain the premier institution for meeting the challenges facing humankind and for finding shared solutions. To quote the expressive words of Kofi Annan,

> "The challenge ahead is to strengthen our capacity for collective action and thus forge a common destiny in a time of accelerating global change". *(A/57/387, chapter I, para. 2)*

We must reaffirm the status of international law while developing it to take account of new situations and contexts. We are doing this successfully in the fields of the protection of human rights, the fight against terrorism, the environment, and in other fields. The inception of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is a major stage, which we welcome. We hope that it will soon begin work on the full range of its activities, in accordance with the terms of its Statute.

We appeal to all Members of our Organization to accede to the Rome Statute in order to give the ICC the universality that will enable it to fight impunity for the gravest of crimes. We must continue, with determination and courage, efforts to reform and revitalize our institutions. Much has already been done, thanks in particular to the efforts of our Secretary-General regarding the Secretariat, whose structures have been modernized and whose procedures have been rationalized, though work must continue, particularly in the financial, budgetary and management areas.

Last week, the Secretary-General rightly drew our attention to the vital renewal of the intergovernmental bodies of our Organization — be it the Security Council, the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council. With respect to the General Assembly in particular, our President — whom I wish warmly to congratulate on his election to his important post — undertook a certain number of initiatives aimed at revitalizing our annual session, in order to give it once again the central place it should occupy as the primary venue for meetings, debates and stock-taking. I wish to assure the President that Luxembourg — which holds a vice-presidency of the General Assembly — will fully support his endeavours.

The ability to work with updated methods on a streamlined agenda that focuses on the real needs of our day seems to us to be a prerequisite for the increased presence and greater relevance of the General Assembly in international debates.

Important progress has already been made in the areas of peacekeeping and peace-building. The presentation in 2000 of the Brahimi report launched an intensive process of reflection and debate, and led to a number of crucial decisions aimed at more effective management of peacekeeping operations. The adoption of Security Council resolution 1327 (2000) and the Assembly's adoption on 3 July 2003 of resolution 57/337, "Prevention of armed conflict", constituted particularly significant events, which we welcome, just as we support their practical implementation.

While the debate has developed considerably, politically and conceptually, we must emphasize the admirable work carried out by the United Nations in the field, in often difficult conditions. It should be recalled that today our Organization is managing 15 peacekeeping operations throughout the world, mobilizing approximately 40,000 Blue Helmets and civilian staff. We can rightly be proud of this, without being complacent. The missions in Timor-Leste, Kosovo and Sierra Leone have shown the decisive impact that the United Nations can have when it has a clear mandate and adequate resources.

Here again, much remains to be done. The difficult situations that persist in countries such as Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia and in the Great Lakes region, not to mention the "forgotten conflicts", continue to demand greater attention by the international community. By contributing to the shared effort, particularly in Kosovo and Afghanistan, Luxembourg has shown its readiness to assume its share of responsibility in this regard.

Special attention should be given in the future to the problem of the transition from intervention in emergencies and crisis situations to the handling of post-conflict contexts. Integrating all dimensions, particularly the political, humanitarian, security and economic, in a single approach, perfecting the instruments and methodologies adapted to this type of challenge, seems to us to be an urgent and necessary task.

The Government of Luxembourg is convinced that the noble task of preserving peace must be based

on a broad and complex concept of security. New threats have been added to the dangers of traditional military confrontation. At the forefront of those threats are terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Two years after the deadly attacks of 11 September, which touched the entire world, we can see that great progress has been made in the fight against terrorism. A firm position of principle and a multidisciplinary approach remain indispensable in order to combat and stop this widespread and destructive phenomenon. Luxembourg will play its full part in this effort, which must be pursued tirelessly, with our Organization playing a major role.

The danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continues to arouse the legitimate concern of our peoples. World leaders have a responsibility to confront this serious threat to peace and security by establishing and strengthening the necessary international regimes. For its part, the European Union has decided, on the basis of the European Council's Thessaloniki Declaration, to develop a long-term strategy against proliferation, and has already adopted basic principles and a concrete plan of action to give shape to this strategy.

Likewise, international arms limitation and reduction efforts, particularly with regard to small arms, must be continued and broadened.

But, given the immediate and tragic urgency of violent conflicts and terrorist attacks, we must not lose sight of a more structural cause of global instability and insecurity: the persistence of poverty and underdevelopment. In a world in which every year almost 15 million children under the age of 5 die of the effects of poverty, we must continue unabated our fight for development. The Millennium Declaration, the conclusions of the Johannesburg Summit and the Monterrey Consensus have shown us the way and the objectives to be achieved in order to establish a real global partnership for development.

The dimensions of this basic problem are many and interdependent. I shall cite just three.

The first dimension is the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, in which Luxembourg is strongly involved and which was quite rightly the focus of attention at the high-level debate that opened this session of the General Assembly. The second is international trade. The failure of the Fifth World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Cancún is undeniably a major disappointment. If we want to achieve a balanced and more just trade system, it is imperative that we resume the dialogue on the objectives to be achieved and the way to achieve them. The third dimension is financing for development, which, according to the Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit, remains "well below the level needed to meet the Goals" (A/58/323, para. 49), even though we are pleased at a recent rise in the volume of official development assistance. For its part, my country is participating in this global solidarity effort by devoting over 0.8 per cent of its gross national product to official development assistance, with a view to achieving the target of 1 per cent about midway through the decade.

While development remains the new name of peace, we must not lose sight of other factors of instability, such as ecological problems, new infectious diseases, transnational crime and corruption, and, lastly, grave and repeated violations of human rights and threats to democracy and good governance.

Let us not forget, in that regard, the wise words of Mr. Annan, who has written:

> "Greater respect for human rights, along with democracy and social justice, will, in the long term, be the most effective prophylactic against terror". (*ibid, para. 76*)

Given these multiple threats, defining a programme of shared security on a global scale, within multilateral bodies, is a primary objective. The European Union, an international actor deeply involved in a vast process of enlargement and constitutional development, has begun the discussion of a strategic concept of security and defence, which will make a major contribution to the international debate in this regard.

For more than a year, international attention has been focused once again on the situation in Iraq. There is no need to go over again before this audience the sequence of events that led last spring to the onset of war in that afflicted part of the world. We all remember the deep divisions that emerged in the international community during that period, threatening to upset the very foundations of our Organization. Regardless of the stand that we may have taken individually regarding

these events, we must now look to the future to determine the prospects of a better future for the Iraqi people. That is the objective that should bring us together now.

We are convinced that the United Nations must play a central role here, on the basis of a clear and substantial mandate accompanied by adequate resources. While it is primarily up to the Iraqi people to decide their own future, we all agree that sovereignty should be transferred to the Iraqis themselves as soon as possible.

In the phase of political, socio-economic and diplomatic transition and reconstruction, there must quickly begin a steady transfer of authority and responsibility to legitimate institutions recognized by the Iraqi people. That process must include the drafting and adoption of a new constitution, and the holding, as soon as the situation allows, of free, democratic elections. Among the essentials for this are the restoration of basic living conditions and security in the daily lives of Iraqis, reconstruction of the basic infrastructure and a rapid relaunching of economic activity.

The Security Council and its members bear the primary responsibility, but the emergence of an independent, democratic, prosperous and peaceful Iraq is in the common interest of all Members of our Organization. Together with its European Union partners, the Government of Luxembourg remains confident that through a broad mobilization the international community will be able to make a decisive contribution to this objective.

Year after year, the General Assembly must address the situation in the Middle East, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, because progress towards a just and lasting peace remains difficult. Even faced with a resumption of tension and repeated acts of violence and terrorism, which we emphatically reject, we have a duty and responsibility to persevere in the search for solutions that will enable reconciliation among the States and peoples of the region. The search for peace must be tireless. The European Union remains prepared and determined to play its role, especially through its action in the Quartet. We remain convinced that the course charted by the road map remains the right way to break the current impasse. But all players who are directly involved must display good will and good faith in re-launching the peace process by creating the indispensable conditions of confidence and security. That is the urgent appeal that we make to them, that is the urgent task that we must undertake.

In the face of wars and violent conflict, in the face of new threats, in the face of violations of human rights, in the face of poverty and underdevelopment, the law and multilateralism are an often fragile but irreplaceable recourse for nations. While we must try vigorously to remedy the weaknesses and insufficiencies in multilateral cooperation, it remains a source of hope for the men and women of the entire world. This is a hope that we must not betray, this is the primary responsibility that is ours at this fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting. However, one representative has requested to exercise the right of reply. May I remind Members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to ten minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): The Eritrean delegation is taking the floor to exercise its right of reply to the statement made by the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia relative to the Eritrea-Ethiopia peace process, in the interest of truth and to set the record straight.

It is true that the two countries signed the Algiers Agreements in 2000. The Algiers Agreements created, inter alia, a Boundary Commission, which was empowered to render a final and binding decision. The United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the European Union (EU) became guarantors of the Agreements. The Ethiopian Government was fully aware of the content and meaning of the Agreements. It is therefore not possible to talk about the Algiers Agreements without mentioning, as the Foreign Minister did, the central institution created by the Agreements, namely the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission.

The Boundary Commission rendered its decision on 13 April 2002. The decision was endorsed by the Security Council and all the guarantors. The Government of Ethiopia also fully accepted the decision and agreed to implement it without any reservations. It also lavished praise on the Commission and its members. Thus, the Foreign Minister had declared that:

"Sanity has won over insanity and the rule of law has prevailed over the law of the jungle. Ethiopia is fully satisfied with the decision of the Independent Boundary Commission. According to the Algiers peace deal, both parties should accept the decision of the Boundary Commission as final and binding with no right to appeal".

The Ethiopian Council of Ministers declared:

"Accordingly, pursuant to the Algiers Agreement, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Government accepts and is ready to implement the legal decision of the Commission. The Government of Ethiopia would like to take this opportunity to extend its regards to the Boundary Commission for discharging its duties with a sense of responsibility and great care. The Government of Ethiopia would also like to express its strong interest in the speedy demarcation of the boundary. In this respect, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Government would like to emphasize that the Eritrean Government should honour its obligations to cooperate in the demarcation process".

By April 2003, the Ethiopian Government started to have reservations and threatened to reject the peace process after the Commission recognized Badme's status — which was the causus belli and consequently was pregnant with legal and political implications, particularly on the issue of who was the aggressor and who the victim of aggression — as sovereign Eritrean territory.

On 19 September 2003, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, wrote a letter to Secretary-General Kofi Annan denouncing the decision as "illegal, unjust and irresponsible" and rejecting the demarcation process. This is what is critically absent from the statement of the Foreign Minister. The truth — the bitter truth — is that Ethiopia has, by rejecting the decisions of the Boundary Commission, effectively killed the Algiers Agreements.

Ethiopia's rulers have in fact made it clear that they do not regard themselves as bound by international norms and decisions, that they have contempt for the rule of law and have decided to make their own determination on matters submitted for arbitration and to then impose it on the Security Council. They are threatening to unleash another round of war if the decision of the arbitration commission is not illegally reversed by the Security Council.

Yet they call themselves law-abiding, peace-loving victims of aggression. Is it possible for a country to commit aggression against itself? After the definitive location of Badme in Eritrea, does it need much imagination as to who has committed aggression or who is the victim of aggression? Must aggression be rewarded by the reversal of a final and binding decision?

Ethiopia's deliberate lack of respect for — and the rejection of — the unanimous, final and binding decision of the Commission, the decisions of the Security Council and the hallowed principles enshrined in the Charter is a threat to the intricate web of *corpus juris* and institutions forged by the international community during the past six decades. Those who weaken the United Nations and its values, principles and norms by rejecting the rules of the game, including the rule of law, must shoulder the appalling responsibility of returning the world to the law of the jungle, war and pestilence, and so must those who appease them.

To this end, the Security Council, which is charged with the primary responsibility of the maintenance of international peace and security, must take the necessary measures to ensure that a State that has solemnly signed an inviolate agreement, under the auspices of the United Nations, fulfils its obligations without any reservations. The United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, must live up to its role as the guardian of the rule of law. It must not delegate that mandate to any institution, whether international or regional, if it is to preserve the integrity of the peace process.

In spite of the past, the people and Government of Eritrea believe in the United Nations and repose trust in it. We continue to have faith in the Security Council and the other guarantors and believe that they will act, without fear or favour, on the basis of what is right and out of respect for, and the preservation of, the integrity of the decisions of the Boundary Commission. They must reaffirm the need to comply with agreements that have been solemnly signed and reject any attempt to abandon them. In so doing, of course, they strengthen the foundation and bolster the effectiveness of the judicial system of the international community.

Mr. Kidane (Ethiopia): Ethiopia does not like to waste the time of this body in engaging in allegations and counter-allegations, but we would like to set the record straight.

Peace-loving Eritrea has committed aggression against almost all its neighbours in its ten years of existence. Ethiopia, on the other hand, in its thousand years of existence as a nation, has never committed aggression against any nation in the world. Ethiopia has a very clear record.

It was in 1998 that Eritrea committed aggression against Ethiopia. The place mentioned earlier by the representative of Eritrea — Badme — happens to be the causus belli. The African Union (AU) deployed its ambassadors to find the truth as to who had administered that area before 1998. The ambassadors' committee returned to the AU with a report of their findings. The report was endorsed by the Council of Ministers and by the heads of State and Government of the AU. It is a glaring fact that Badme was being administered by Ethiopia before 1998 and that it has never been under Eritrean administration — not even for a single day. So that settles the issue: Eritrea was the aggressor, and Ethiopia was the victim of aggression.

After the aggression had been committed, Ethiopia literally begged Eritrea to leave Ethiopian land. Eritrea refused to comply until it was pushed out by Ethiopian forces. After pushing out Eritrean forces in self-defence, Ethiopia went deep into Eritrean territory in the process of its counteroffensive. It was obvious to everyone that the Eritrean army was in total disarray. But the Ethiopian Government — a peace-loving Government — decided to stop the war unilaterally, and our Prime Minister declared unilaterally that the war was over because the aggression had been reversed. That was what happened.

It was because of Ethiopia that the Algiers Agreement became a reality. There were brokers of that peace agreement: the United Nations, the Government of the United States and the European Union were in Algiers as well and were witness to the Agreement. So it was Ethiopia, with the assistance of those international partners, that made the Algiers Agreement a reality. If Ethiopia had not been in favour of peace, there would have been no reason for Ethiopia to stop the war and to declare it ended. Ethiopia could have pushed into any area; Eritrea was not in a position to defend itself.

After the Algiers Agreement had come into being, Ethiopia cooperated with the Boundary Commission, as the representative of Eritrea rightly put it. Ethiopia accepted the delimitation decision. We still stand by our commitment, and we still accept the Boundary Commission's delimitation decision. The problem arose when the Boundary Commission failed to live up to its words — that is, its words in the delimitation decision. Since the Commissioners had never been to Ethiopia or to Eritrea, and since the Commission had never carried out a field investigation, the Commission promised that there would be such an investigation before demarcation was completed. If any anomalies were found in the process of investigation, such anomalies were to be corrected. Ethiopia requested the Commission to correct any such anomalies. The Commission suggested that there were anomalies, but that they could be corrected only if Ethiopia and Eritrea came together and provided the Commission with an additional mandate.

Ethiopia and Eritrea are not on speaking terms and were not on speaking terms; therefore, there was no way for us to provide the Commission with an additional mandate. So Ethiopia suggested to the Commission that it needed no additional mandate to correct its own mistakes. The Commission then suggested that there should be dialogue between the parties. The Secretary-General and the Security Council also suggested to the parties that there should be dialogue with a view to making the peace process successful, but Eritrea remains adamant that there will be no dialogue. There is no additional mandate for the Boundary Commission; the Commission's delimitation decision must be applied mechanically.

As it stands, the Boundary Commission's decision — which the Boundary Commission itself admitted contains anomalies — divides not only villages, but homesteads. The Commission based its decision on the conduct of the parties, and it is very difficult to imagine a single homestead being administered by two nations; that is simply impossible. So, as I said earlier, the Commission itself recognized that there were anomalies but suggested that, in order to correct them, we come together and provide it with an additional mandate, and Eritrea refused. The Secretary-General and the Security Council suggested that we talk, and Eritrea refused. So there it is.

We should like to suggest to the Security Council that the demarcation process should continue in the areas where there is agreement and that it continue to seek the facilitation of partners with a view to resolving the remaining problems. I should like to reiterate my Government's position that we remain committed to the Algiers Agreement and to the Boundary Commission's delimitation decision. We are still prepared to have the boundary demarcated, but we seek the assistance of the international community in resolving the remaining issues. I would challenge Eritrea to join us in that peaceful exercise.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): I just heard a series of half-truths and non-truths from the representative of Ethiopia, and therefore I must at least refer to two or three of the issues he raised.

The first issue is the question of dialogue. The representative of Ethiopia said that the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the rest of the international community have asked both parties to engage in dialogue on demarcation issues. That is incredible, because it is a blatant misrepresentation of the United Nations position on the matter. Nothing in the Secretary-General's various reports, in the Boundary Commission's recommendations or in the Security Council's decisions even remotely suggests dialogue on demarcation. On the contrary, they urge prompt and full demarcation.

For example, paragraph 31 of the Secretary-General's report of 23 June 2003 (S/2003/665) — we had hoped that the Ethiopian representative would cite paragraphs, dates and reference numbers when he made wild allegations — emphatically declares that "expeditious demarcation of the border is crucial" and urges the two parties to cooperate with the Commission "so that these activities can be undertaken without delay". In his report of 4 September (S/2003/858), the Secretary-General declares, in paragraph 32:

> "In the same voluntary manner as the two parties created the Boundary Commission and selected its members, they must now accept its decisions and assist it in the expeditious demarcation of the border".

His report of 6 March 2003 (S/2003/257) indicates in paragraph 13 that

> "the United Nations would be prepared, without compromising the Boundary Commission's decisions, to facilitate the resolution of problems that may arise as a result of the transfer of territorial control, as provided in article 4.16 of the Algiers Agreement".

How, then, could Eritrea have rejected a proposal that was never made?

I have Security Council resolution 1507 (2003) of 12 September. I quote paragraph 6, in which the Council:

> "*Reaffirms* the crucial importance of political dialogue between the two countries for the success of the peace process and the consolidation of progress made so far, *welcomes* initiatives to facilitate this dialogue, and *calls again on* both parties to normalize their relationship through political dialogue".

So, political dialogue refers first to the consolidation of the gains and, secondly, normalization of relations. It never, ever, mentioned dialogue on demarcation.

History will tell the truth about who had and had not won the war. But a court of law decides where a place is and a place is not. It is not for me to say Badme is Eritrean. It is not for the Ethiopians to say Badme is Ethiopian. We had an Arbitration Commission, and the Arbitration Commission emphatically and unequivocally said that Badme is part of Eritrea. There is total clarification on this matter. Clarification was given. Badme was part of Eritrea, and whether the Ethiopian representative likes it or not, Badme is and will be part of Eritrea. Whosoever attacked Badme is ...

The President: I am sorry that I have to interrupt the speaker, but the five-minute period is up.

Mr. Kidane (Ethiopia): We have come to discover that the word "dialogue" has become malignant. It is considered a vice by our friends in the north. We have no aversion to dialogue. Eritrea has. That is very unfortunate. We are sacrificing the livelihood of our people. We are condemning our people to poverty, because we cannot make peace between ourselves. I suggest that we should come back to our senses and start thinking about our poor people, at least for a single day.

Just to set the record straight, I would like to refer this august body to Security Council resolution 1507 (2003) of 12 September, in which the Council

suggested that there should be dialogue between the parties with a view to realizing a lasting and durable peace.

The Algiers Agreement is about lasting and durable peace. It is not a mechanical drawing of a temporary line that will end up being a recipe for another round of conflict. That what the Algiers Agreement is and that was what the Security Council outlined in its resolutions. That is a fact. We have a series of resolutions in which the Security Council suggested that there is a need for dialogue. There are also letters addressed to the Ethiopian Government by the United Nations on different occasions, and they all allude to the need for dialogue between the parties with a view to sorting out the difficulties that we are encountering in the process of demarcating boundaries.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.